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ABSTRACT

A proven, successful adult basic literacy improvisation theater project was expanded through development of videotapes. Because rural Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania, consists solely of a number of small towns, traveling great distances to do presentations made outreach difficult. Project staff conducted the following activities: purchased a video monitor, recruited additional improv players, outlined additional skits that were given to players, scheduled presentations and public exposure to previously unavailable groups, streamlined evaluation methods, and kept records and scrapbook. Sixteen performances were arranged during fiscal year 1990-91; four other performances were produced for such groups as council members and Friends of Literacy. A total of 2,729 people were reached through the 16 performances. Other literacy providers requested copies of the tape. Evaluation included recording feedback during question and answer periods at each performance and questionnaires distributed at the end of each performance. All audiences were found to be more receptive to skits rather than to slides or a verbal presentation. (A program and the questionnaire are appended.) (YLB)

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# ENCORE

## The next step by the IMPROVISATION THEATRE GROUP!

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# ENCORE

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July 1, 1990 - June 30, 1991

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# Chapter I

## ABSTRACT

Being the only providers of Adult Basic Literacy in rural Susquehanna County brings us constantly face to face with the necessity of creating outreach programs that are both flexible and portable.

This need lead us to expand, our, proven successful, improvisation theatre project to video taping. Having tapes depicting the trials and reactions of the adult who cannot read, the clues to identification of that individual, the services available through our council and the positive results obtained by "New Readers" who become part of the program, gave us both the flexibility and portability we required.

# Chapter II

## INTRODUCTION

Using the taped approach to presenting our Improvisation Theatre program created several positives from the onset.

Number one: the "one step forward" and "no steps back" of extending our live improv approach which had worked so well in the previous grant year (1989-90) put us on a path that we had previously proven to be successful.

Number two: the "live" performance volunteers were in place agreeable to continuing on tape and new volunteers were ready to become involved in the videos.

Number three: the improv coordinator was able to borrow the use of sites, props and camcorders at times convenient to the lenders.

After we were notified of approval of the grant by:

Pennsylvania Department of Education
Division of Adult Basic and
Literacy Education Programs
333 Market Street, 6th Floor
Harrisburg, Pa 17126-0333

We began preparing ground work for the program. Actual filming began..... after funds were received.

Copies of this report and the videos are available through AdvancE/PA's ADULT EDUCATION CLEARINGHOUSE, 333 Market Street, Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333 or by calling Annette McAlister at 800-992-2283.

# Chapter III

## PROBLEM

Outreach to all of the 840 square miles of rural Susquehanna County which has no major population areas, just a number of small towns, is a problem first and foremost of traveling distances to do presentations. Added to this there are six school districts widely removed from each other.

Yet the problems of functional illiteracy are no less serious and no less in need of being addressed in this type of area.

# Chapter IV

## GOALS

Our goal was to find a way to bring in effective improvisation theatre with all its players to these far reaching towns and schools. We were able to purchase a video monitor with a grant received from IBM and coupled with our 353 grant we were now in the television business.

We had aimed to arrange a minimum of 15 performances within Susquehanna County, 2 performances to be open to council members, Friends of Literacy, students, councils of neighboring counties and the public at large.

Also, we were to produce a minimum of three video tapes with a minimum of three different scenarios per tape, to be used in our public relations campaign, which could be utilized as a fundraising tool as well as a training tool for other literacy groups.

As a result of the fifteen performances, we planned to increase the Susquehanna County Volunteer Literacy Council by the following:

a. Students 15%
b. Volunteers 20%
c. Financial or in-kind Contributions $500.00

# Chapter V

## PROCEDURES OF ATTACK

1. Additional Improv players were recruited.

2. Additional skits were outlined and given to players.

3. Presentations and public exposure were scheduled to previously unavailable groups.

4. Methods of evaluation were streamlined.

5. Records and Scrapbook kept.

# Chapter VI

## OBJECTIVES MET

We were to arrange a minimum of fifteen (15) performances within Susquehanna County, during fiscal year 1990-1991. In fact sixteen (16) performances were actually given. Also, we proposed to arrange and produce two (2) performances open to council members, Friends of Literacy, students, councils of neighboring counties and the public at large. We produced four (4) performances to groups which include the above mentioned entities, {three(3) of the four (4)} performances were given to the general public during National Literacy Week in September of 1990.

With the sixteen (16) performances given, a total of 2,729 people were made aware of the problems of the educationally disadvantaged. Plus copies of our tape, after the evaluation of our 89/90 "Enactment" live improvisational theatre 353 program appeared in the February 1991 issue of FOCUS, were requested by other Literacy Providers. In addition to a number of requests from within the state we received them from Literacy Volunteers of Washington Co. in Chipley, Florida and Arthur Ellison, Director Office of Adult Basic Education, State Department of Education, Concord, NH.

New Actors, Fran Donovan/Certified Tutor Trainer, Jean Hirsch/Family of Literacy, Dave.../New Reader, Diane Rumage/ Family of Literacy, Eva Rumage, Stacy Rumage, Dave Rumage Jr./Junior Family of Literacy, Linda Sears/Tutor, Betty Timmons/Family of Literacy, Ron Miles/Family of Literacy, Annette Rogers/Family of Literacy, all provided us with generous amounts of their time and talents.

New Skits were developed and include:

"SENSITIZING EDUCATORS"

"DROP OUT PREVENTION"

"TAKING FINANCIAL CONTROL"

"YOU'RE NEVER TOO OLD TO LEARN"

"UNFORTUNATELY.....THE USUAL WAY"

"HOPEFULLY.....THE WAY IT WILL BECOME"

"WORKPLACE DANGERS"

"WITH OUR CHILDREN, "DO AS I SAY NOT etc. etc.", DOESN'T WORK"

"EVERY VOTER COUNTS"

We continued to use the proven evaluation methods, including: Postcards and short evaluation sheets.

We have increased our "Family of Literacy", a core of volunteers, to help the council with other than tutoring duties. The Montrose Chapter of the Northeast Tri-Co M/H M/R clients and staff or approximately 32 people, did much to swell our numbers as a recognizable source of assistance.

# Chapter VII

## OBJECTIVES NOT MET

Because of the late arrival of funding we did not have the money to begin filming until after the holidays and into the more temperate spring weather.

We did not anticipate when applying for this grant the extra blank tapes that would be necessary to submit as product should we put only three (3) skits on each tape.

We opted to re-shoot all nine (9) of them on a single tape and cut the costs of product by two-thirds.

# Chapter VIII

## EVALUATION TECHNIQUES

Since it wasn't broke, we didn't fix it. We continued to use the same data collection mechanisms including recording feedback during question and answer periods at each performance. As an evaluation tool we designed a brief questionnaire. This was handed out at the end of each performance and collected as the audience finished. We felt that this would help us to judge the effectiveness of the improv group in educating the community.*

Handouts - a specially coded card was developed and passed out with the outreach material at every performance. It was hoped that this would make feedback readily apparent that contact was from the improv group.

These cards were coded with initials plus a date code. In this manner the approximate number in attendance was obtained.

Money received as a result of "ENCORE" was credited to the improv group. Also in-kind contributions were noted. In-kind contributions included free advertising, computer expertise, announcements in neighboring council's newsletters, prop donations, loan of camcorders and on site locations.

*We reprinted these questionnaires, along with the informational programs, on colored paper that was appropriate to the season. This inexpensive addition seemed to attract both more interest and response from the viewing audience.

# Chapter IX

## Results of Evaluation

Moving our efforts to video tape proved to be very successful. It was no longer necessary to clear scheduled performances with the volunteers for the appropriate skits. THEY WERE ON TAPE.

Since our monitor has a - continuous play- setting we were able to set it up at larger events to play all day to the changing audiences. This left us free to do One-On-One outreach to the people who had questions.

The performances by our New Reader volunteer, Pat, still do much to rivet audience attention. Pat herself has benefited from all the positive feedback she receives from these audiences. Her growing self confidence helped her to become Pennsylvania Outstanding Student of the Year 1991. She also served on the TLC nominating committee, Chairman of the Susquehanna County Volunteer Literacy Council's Student Support Group (which she founded), New Reader Representative on the Board of Directors of the Susquehanna County Volunteer Literacy Council, served as a delegate from the Eastern States at the President's Conference on Libraries and Information Services in Washington, D.C. and has been selected as a delegate from Pennsylvania to the National Adult Literacy Congress to be held in Washington, D. C. in September 1991.. More importantly perhaps is the fact that Pat has completed her Tutor Training and will soon have a student of her own.

Our other New Reader cast member David, along with Pat attended the Northeast Regional Adult Literacy Conference at Villanova and was able because of the reaction he has been getting to his performances to open up to other attendees. David will also take tutor training in our next session.

We are especially proud of the New Reader involvement in this project as they can certainly keep our scenerios honest, our audiences paying attention and at the same time build their own sense of accomplishment.

Over the course of the grant year we were able to do sixteen (16) presentations. We presented to a PTO, a small business, a junior high school assembly, a number of social groups, human service organizations and church groups. We also showed our videos at our three Family Reading Festivals and at our fundraising Arts & Crafts Auction. All four of these events were open to the public and attracted a wide variety of audiences.

Our WONDERFUL VOLUNTEERS gave us 104 1/2 hours of their time and our tapes were viewed by 2,729 people.

# Chapter X

## FINDINGS AND PRODUCT

We have found that all audiences are more receptive to skits rather than to slides or a verbal presentation. It has seemed that the audiences can relate to the performers and become involved to the point of tears.

The "New Readers" and their families who have become members of our theatre group have brought with them an energy, an excitement and an honesty which has worked not only on their fellow performers, but on audiences as well. Questions after performances clearly show the audiences have been reached.

# Chapter XI

## DISTRIBUTION PROCEDURE FOR PRODUCT

This project requires only involved volunteers, taping, use of some equipment and friends. If you would like to give it a try, copies are available from:

AdvancE/PA's ADULT EDUCATION CLEARINGHOUSE
333 Market Street
Harrisburg, Pa 17126-0333

or call Annette McAlister at 800-992-2283.

# Chapter XII

## FINALE

When you need a program for outreach that will attract attention, from the public, television is a wonderful tool.

Creating your own scenarios directly related to the problems of illiteracy is a simple task. You have a wealth of plots available from your "New Readers" and your tutors.

Using the talent of both these groups is considerably easier when you are video taping rather than asking them to appear in person. We have received an almost unbelievable amount of cooperation from them. Frequently students and tutors will take parts in skits during a regular session. You are often not asking for special time arrangements by using this time frame.

Some live performances are still being used but even these can be put on tape to present again at another time.

As we had anticipated we did run into the problem of two groups wanting a presentation at the same time. The Louise Bache Business and Professional Women's Club and The Montrose Area Lions Club meet at opposite sides of Susquehanna County at exactly the same time. Because of our present program, Project Director, Marilyn Potter, herself a member of the Montrose BPW and our New Reader Pat, took a live program to the BPW.

Improv and Outreach Coordinator Eleanor Highfield and Certified Tutor Trainer Fran Donovan took the tapes and monitor to the Lions Club.

Neither group lost anything in the way of information presented or enthusiasm for the project. Reactions from both were excellent.

We have already been able to share our tapes with many other groups of literacy providers, both inside and outside our Commonwealth.

The project is simple to set-up, is inexpensive (especially if you can borrow camcorders) and best of all, fun.

No one originally involved has dropped out and we are continually finding more volunteers for this project. Audience reaction to recognition of some of the players involved creates real attention to the presentation.

This is a Win-Win project that we cannot encourage you enough to attempt.

CONTACT --

THE SUSQUEHANNA COUNTY
VOLUNTEER LITERACY
COUNCIL --
PO BOX 277
MONTROSE, PA.
18801

The Council holds workshops at various locations in Susquehanna County to train - tutors. We welcome volunteers to our group If you would like more information about becoming a tutor, an actor in our group or a volunteer to serve in the many other way important to the growth of our program.....

OR

If you have an adult student you would like to refer to us...

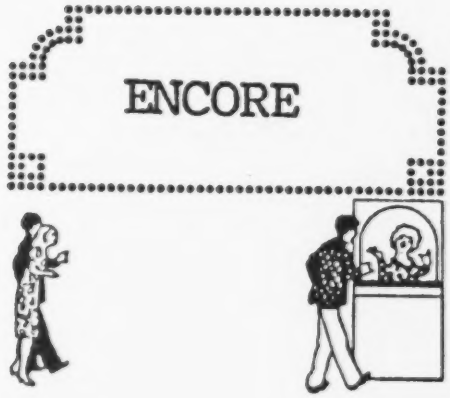
PLEASE FILL OUT THE ENCLOSED CARD AND RETURN IT TO US AFTER THE PERFORMANCE OR MAIL IT TO US AT YOUR CONVENIENCE.

THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING

The improvisation players of the Susquehanna County Volunteer Literacy Council --

BE DON'T PAY OUR VOLUNTEERS... Not because they are worthless BUT because they are PRICELESS






VIDEO PRESENTATIONS OF THE TRIALS & REACTIONS OF THE ADULT WHO CANNOT READ WHEN FACING LIFE.

The next step by the IMPROVISATION THEATRE GROUP!

MODERATOR: Eleanor Highfield
Outreach Coordinator

| | |
|---|---|
| RUTH HUDSON | Tutor Trainer and the inspiration for this project. |

LIST OF PLAYERS

| | |
|---|---|
| MARY GOLDFEIN | Tutor |
| VIRGINIA HAUSER | Tutor |
| ELEANOR HOLLENBECK | Member at Large |
| OTIS HUDSON | Tutor / Budget Chairperson |
| AMY LA RUE | Tutor / Secretary |
| PAULINE MAC NEAL | Chairperson Emeritus |
| TRUDY SUMMERS | Tutor / 2nd Vice President |
| JUDY WEILER | Tutor / Grant Committee |
| PATRICIA WILLIAMS | Student Representative |

AND

ON OCCASION ONE OF OUR "NEW READERS" WILL JOIN IN THE PRESENTATION ALONG WITH SOME OF THE FRIENDS OR FAMILY OF LITERACY WHO ARE PART OF OUR COUNCIL. *

* We have also been known to call upon members of our audience to take part. Please consider this as you would any other WARNING !



The short scenarios we will present are <u>not</u> based on dramatic fiction. They are the real life problems faced by those adults who cannot read.

It is our hope that after watching them you will have a better understanding of how difficult <u>all</u> phases of life can be for the adult who suffers from the "HIDDEN HANDICAP"

If you are aware of an adult who is facing life with the problem of illiteracy we can help ! ! ! !

CALL: (717)278-9027*

FOR FREE - CONFIDENTIAL

ONE - ON - ONE TUTORING

OR ---------->

# ENCORE

## The next step by the IMPROVISATION THEATRE GROUP!

WE WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR HELP WITH OUR PROGRAMS. IF YOU WILL TAKE JUST A FEW MINUTES OF YOUR TIME TO ANSWER THE QUESTIONS BELOW AND TO ADD ANY COMMENTS YOU MAY HAVE WE WILL BE VERY GRATEFUL.

**Please check one**

THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I HAVE ATTENDED A WORKSHOP OR PRESENTATION ON THE PROBLEMS FACING THE FUNCTIONALLY ILLITERATE ADULT.

_____ YES

_____ NO

THIS WORKSHOP PRESENTATION GAVE ME: _____ MORE INFORMATION

_____ NO ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW MORE ABOUT _____

_____

_____

_____

(PLEASE USE THE BACK OF THIS SHEET IF YOU NEED ADDITIONAL SPACE)

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

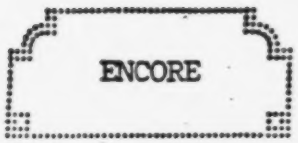
(STREET) (CITY/TOWN) (STATE) (ZIP)

VIDEO PRESENTATIONS OF THE TRIALS & REACTIONS OF THE ADULT WHO CANNOT READ WHEN FACING LIFE.

Susquehanna County Volunteer
Literary Council, Inc.
Box 277
Montrose, PA 18801

(717) 278-9027
Eleanor

ENCORE

I saw  and I am interested in more information. Please contact me:

Name _____
(Please Print)

Address _____
Street City State Zip

Telephone ( ) _____
Area Code Number

PLACE STAMP HERE

Susquehanna County Volunteer
Literacy Council, Inc.
Box 277
Montrose, PA 18801